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Synopses of Important Articles.

THEOLOGICAL AIMS AND PROGRESS. AN ADDRESS TO THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS. By Rev. Professor J. S. BANKS, in the *Thinker* for November, 1894.

While the present age is often said to be unfavorable to theological study a century that has produced such works as Flint's *Theism*, Orr's *Christian View*, Bruce's *Humiliation of Christ*, Fairbairn's *Christ's Place in Modern Theology*, and the Bampton Lectures of Liddon, Sanday, and Gore can hardly be called a wilderness.

Theology must be separated from religion, but both are essential. There is a science of the religious as well as of other life, and that, too, of necessity. Every man who worships God as Father, Son, and Spirit as distinct and yet one, has a doctrine of the Trinity. Dogmas are human interpretations of God's dealings. They therefore are subject to revision in the light of increased knowledge. Theology is accordingly not unprogressive. It has, in fact, always shown itself responsive to the new thought of the day. From the days of the early alliance of the church with Greek philosophy, through the Middle Ages and Reformation, down to the present recognition of development in the teachings of the Scriptures, theology has always kept within the influence of extra-ecclesiastical thought.

Especially is the theology of today marked by the recognition of the fact that revelation was gradual. Sometimes this leads to extremes, but this should not lead to its condemnation. As in the field of physical science there are Christian evolutionists, so in the sphere of biblical criticism are there Christian evolutionists. In the recognition of this development do we see the superiority of later biblical teachings, as well as the best explanation of the moral difficulties of the Old Testament.

The effect of new discoveries is in the main to confirm old beliefs. New methods, in the main, do the same—as, for example, the latest studies in the canon. The new attitude towards miracles and prophecy contributes greatly to Christian faith. Miracles are no longer the mere credentials of revelation, but a part of it. Prophecy is no longer regarded as isolated, limited merely to prediction and its fulfillment, but is seen to pervade all Scripture.

Another new point of view of theology makes it Christocentric, *i. e.*, treats it from the doctrine and work of Christ as its center. In some instances this view would make Christ supersede the Scriptures. But this is untenable. The Christocentric treatment is possible only on the basis of Scripture. To

the dilemma, "Christ *or* Scripture," we oppose the conjunction, "Christ *and* Scripture."

A kindred tendency today is to magnify the Incarnation. In this there is nothing suspicious as long as it be not at the expense of the doctrine of the atonement. Many eminent writers, notably Westcott and Dorner, make the Incarnation independent of the Atonement. But while it is possible that the Reformation laid undue stress on the doctrine of sacrifice and redemption, and while we are thankful for the increased significance given to the Incarnation, it is even more necessary than ever today to maintain an objective atonement for sin. And here our day has so admirably distinguished between the fact and the theories of the atonement that it appears very possible, that we have too exclusively pressed the forensic side of the doctrine. Righteousness must not be severed from love.

Further we note that the ruling ideas of modern thought in many ways directly favor Christian doctrine. Thus miracles are no longer ruled out as impossible; and the unity of communities and the race is a principle largely recognized in science as well as in Scripture and theology.

For the young student of theology the mastery of these things is necessary: of Scripture, and therefore of the language of the Scripture; of Latin, as the language of the great theologians; of philosophy, which is vitally connected with theology. And above all should he, as a preacher, be absolute master of his own subject, as the source of fervor and the ground of conviction.

This article is an exceedingly fair outline of the characteristics of modern theological thought. Its positions are at once conservative and appreciative of the positive results of modern scholarship. The time is rapidly passing when such results are to be laughed out of court, or answered by some dilemma or parallel. The author is especially happy in his perception of the fact that the new criticism of the Scriptures tends to confirm all essential faith at the same time it clears away unessential traditions.

S. M.

THE NEW SYRIAC GOSPELS. BY J. RENDEL HARRIS, in the *Contemporary Review*, for November, 1894.

Examination shows that this codex, discovered by Mrs. Lewis in the convent at Mount Sinai in the spring of 1892, is closely connected with the Syriac version published by Cureton in 1859. But it is certainly an older text, and one worthy of the closest examination.

In point of omissions the MS. is important in that it corroborates the omissions in the earliest texts of such passages as John 7:53-8:11 (the adulteress passage), and the last twelve verses of Mark. In general it favors the shorter readings, being especially lacking in such passages as are generally held to be interpolations. In general, too, its readings are those of the best Greek uncials.

One or two additions should be noticed. Matt. 27:16 reads: "Which will ye that I release unto you? Jesus Bar-Abba, or Jesus that is called Christ?" In John 11:39 the MS. adds to the command by Jesus to take away the stone this question of Martha: "Why are they taking away the stone?"

But by far the most original feature of the MS. is its readings in the first chapter of Matthew. Thus Matt. 1:16: "Jacob begat Joseph; *Joseph* (to whom was espoused the Virgin Mary) *begat Jesus* who is called Christ."

1:18: Now the birth of Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, when they had not come together, she was found with child from the Holy Ghost.

1:21: *She shall bear thee* a son, etc.

1:25: *She bare him a son* and *he called* his name Jesus.

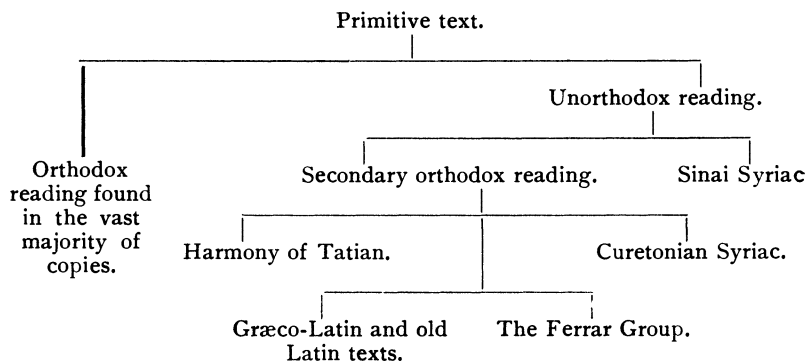
Do these readings represent the Gospel in the process of forming the final orthodox text, or do they show the contamination of the primitive text? Evidently the question is of great importance to theology, but it must be settled by the impartial processes of textual criticism.

1. The novel reading in Matt. 1:16 is not solitary in the MS., but is one of a series of readings, all betraying a similar tendency, and probably the same hand.

The Curetonian text of these passages ("To whom betrothed the Virgin Mary bare Jesus who is called Christ") is evidently an emendation in the service of orthodoxy. The existence of a text similar to this of the Sinaitic Syriac MS. is, further, at least suggested by the opposition of Chrysostom to similar readings.

2. This series of readings was in the line of ancestry of a great variety of MSS.

This is seen by the diffusion of the secondary readings they have provoked. Thus in the Tatian Harmony occurs the phrase, "He was living with her in purity." Whether the Harmony was based on the first Syriac Gospel, or *vice versa*, it is difficult to deny that the Syriac version, either at its source or near to the same, was in the form preserved in our MS. The reformed Curetonian reading is also approximated in the Ferrar group of Greek MSS. It was also current in the old Latin, and in the Armenian. Thus it is evident that in very early times there were two branches of text, one the orthodox, which we know by the accepted and almost universal Greek tradition; the other, a non-Catholic text in which Joseph was represented as the husband of Mary in a different sense from the Catholic acceptance. This line of unorthodox tradition again divides into two, one of which carries a reformed text (*e. g.*, the Curetonian), and the other which conserves the non-Catholic text (*e. g.*, the present MS.). To the secondary orthodox side belongs a large number of texts that bear the trace of reformation from unorthodoxy. This diagram may make this clearer:



3. This divergence in the primitive evangelical tradition corresponds in its first stage with a divergence of opinion in the primitive church.

The genealogies preserved in the canonical Gospels were compiled to confirm existing opinions, rather than to produce beliefs. It is quite possible that every school of thought, Christian or Judæo-Christian, had its Book of Generations. Indeed, we find historical traces of opinions concerning our Lord's origin other than those of the Catholic faith. These are chiefly: (a) He was the son of Joseph and Mary without any suggestion that his birth was doubtful or unusual (Cerinthus, Carpocrates and the Adoptionists generally). (b) The scandalous story that Jesus was the son of Mary by some unknown person, said to be a soldier named Panther (Talmud). This view, in which the term Panther is probably an anagram of Parthenos, supplies second-century evidence for the currency and acceptance of the doctrine of the Partheneity of Mary. This also appears from the denial by Cerinthus of the virgin birth as an impossibility.

But this does not prove that the doctrine was universally held. The Adoptionists (*i. e.*, those who held that the divine nature came upon Jesus at his baptism and not at his birth), certainly rejected it. Now, as we know from Epiphanius that Cerinthus and Carpocrates attempted to prove from their Gospel of Matthew that Christ was of the seed of Joseph and Mary, the present MS. ought to be described as an Adoptionist MS., or at least as a MS. colored with Adoptionist views. This conclusion is supported by further emphasis of such views in a passage containing variant reading of John 1:34, "I saw and bare record that this is the Chosen of God." This division of the early church over the question of the Incarnation is further illustrated by the controversies between the two parties, in which the Old Testament was made to support both positions.

4. Which are the more genuine readings—those of the MS. or those of the orthodox Greek text?

Plausible arguments based upon the wide dispersion of similar readings may be adduced to favor the genuineness of the readings of the MS. But

they are overbalanced by the probabilities that the ancestor of the Ferrar group of MSS. was influenced by a Syriac MS. of the Gospels, and that the same thing is true of the Tatian Harmony and the old Latin texts. Thus the Cerinthian readings (*e. g.*, those contained in this MS.), are behind the whole body of "Western" texts.

The arguments in favor of a later origin for these readings than that of the orthodox Greek text are: (*a*) The late term Virgin Mary; (*b*) the inconsistency of the MS. in its retention of Matt. 1:18, and the incident of the angel. We should have to reduce the Infancy section to shreds before it would satisfy an Adoptionist hypothesis.

It appears, then, that the writer of this MS. is not the original composer of the text, but some later person, very near in date to the first hand, who has attempted to make the story non-miraculous by a series of inadequate incisions and excisions in an already existing text.

In a communication to the *Academy* of November 17, Fred C. Conybeare rejects both this conclusion of Professor Harris, and its opposite. He argues that the MS. does not represent an original orthodox text being hereticized, because: (1) the genealogy finds its only logical conclusion in the form given in v. 16; (2) the genealogy so devised cannot be a later addition as is seen by a comparison of vv. 18 sq. with v. 1; (3) the idiosyncrasies of the MS. were once a part of a widely diffused and established text; (4) a heretic seeking to produce a naturalistic text would not have left v. 19 at least. On the other hand the MS. does not represent an original heretical text in the process of becoming orthodox, for (1) what orthodox person would have left in vv. 16, 21, 25? and (2) if the earliest account was naturalistic, how can we account for vv. 18-20, 22 and 23. He, therefore, attempts a mediating view by no means based on textual criticism and but imperfectly defining his position in regard to the age of the text. This view is, (1) the birth of Jesus is here described in accordance with the belief of Philo that the Holy Spirit was the giver of the soul or reason of all children, the flesh being the result of natural processes; (2) some overzealous, carnally-minded person introduced vv. 19, 20 as a gloss; (3) the expression in v. 16 the Virgin Mary (or Mary the Virgin) is an early term, and springs from the custom in Philo's time, in the Church of Smyrna A. D. 110, in the churches of Alexandria and Carthage A. D. 190, of calling widows who did not remarry but lived to God, "virgins."

Most persons will be cautious in accepting this clever method of clearing away the difficulty, especially as it is so thoroughly based upon the assumption that the usage of Philo is a sufficient explanation of difficulties in the synoptic history. An even more cogent objection to the acceptance of the text of the MS. as that of the primitive Gospel is the fact that such a view presupposes a history of the text entirely unsupported by any manuscript evidence. The only relevant facts are those mentioned by Professor Harris, for which his theory amply accounts. Mr. Conybeare is so under the influence of his purely subjective theory that it does not apparently occur to him to suggest such a history.

Another and quite as ingenious theory is contained in a communication from F. P. Badham in the same number of the *Academy*. Mr. Badham takes Professor

Harris sharply to task for believing that the new MS. contains a perversion of an originally orthodox text, maintaining that no heretic would so flagrantly stultify himself as to leave in v. 18. He himself sees in the new readings only a sharper presentation of the difficulties long recognized in the received text, but which, as he has pointed out in his *Formation of the Gospels*, largely disappear when the Matthæan genealogy is not separated from the Virgin-birth, and the corresponding passage in Luke from the Annunciation passage. Thus, according to this view, the author of the first chapter of Matthew held that Jesus was the son of Joseph and of Mary, only that the relation between the two parents was "abnormal," and "the instrumentality of Joseph, unconscious,"—while at the same time "the instrumentality of the Virgin was unconscious too." The obscuration of Joseph is due to his early death.

It will probably not require long thought to recognize the difficulty in the position of Mr. Badham, wholly apart from his subjective attitude as a critic of the text. Both his suggestions and those of Mr. Conybeare deserve consideration, but illustrate the difficulties in reconciling a naturalistic account of the event with the received text in Matthew and Luke. While the matter of the Infancy passages is a perplexing one—especially in the apparent ignorance of their existence on the part of other writers of the New Testament—the thorough-going, objective criticism of Professor Harris seems to make it certain that the oldest form of the story thus far received is not that of the new MS. but that of the received text. Until an older and variant text is discovered the problem is not one of textual criticism but of exegetical presupposition.

S. M.